

Allama Mashriqi's Daughter, Masuda Yousaf

A woman who knew the truth about India's partition



A tribute on her 28th death anniversary

By Nasim Yousaf

I grew up listening to my mother's accounts of the fight for the freedom of the Indian sub-continent. She told us about her father, Allama Mashriqi, as well as Quaid-e-Azam M.A. Jinnah, Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Jawarharlal Nehru and others. I am so fortunate to have learned about history from her, her siblings, and the Khaksars — who witnessed the struggle for freedom firsthand. My mother's sacrifices and challenging life deserves an entire book. I owe my beloved and honorable mother everything for teaching me about history and for molding me into the person I am today. This piece is a tribute to her and should be of interest to writers of South Asian history and those interested in Allama Mashriqi's family.

Masuda Begum (later Mrs. Masuda Yousaf) was born in Lahore in 1930. The youngest daughter of Allama Mashriqi (from his first wife, Vilayat Begum), she came from a family of nobility, a family comprised of highly distinguished individuals from the Indian sub-continent. Her paternal ancestors were part of the Mughal courts. The villages of Hameedpur and Bayazeedpur in the district of Gurdaspur in India were named after them (Diwan Mohammad Hameed Khan and Diwan Mohammad Bayazeed Khan respectively). Her grandfather, Khan Ata Muhammad Khan (1846-1925), was a high-standing intellectual who owned a bi-weekly called *Vakil*. His literary works earned him praise from many learned men and he was awarded the *Tamgha-i-Majeedia* by Sultan Abdul Hamid (ruler of the Ottoman empire). Her paternal grandfather, Professor Miraj-ud-Din, had substantial land holdings and was a founder of Oriental College of Commerce (Lahore). The town of Sharifabad (in Pakistan, near Nawabshah [Sind]) was named after Masuda Begum's maternal uncle, Mohammad Sharif. And Masuda Begum's brother-in-law was globally acknowledged social scientist Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan (founder of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development and the Orangi Pilot Project, Karachi, Pakistan).

In 1946, Masuda Begum was married to my father, Muhammad Yousaf Khan. Mr. Yousaf Khan was an army officer who obtained commission from British India's Military Academy in Dehradun. Together, Mr. and Mrs. Yousaf had seven children (six boys and one girl). My mother was very generous, both in taking care of her children and those outside the family (she donated money to the poor on a regular basis and provided substantial amounts to individuals to set up their own businesses). But along with her generosity and caring nature, my mother also proved that she was tough and determined, qualities she inherited from her father. When Mr. Yousaf Khan died in 1962, she assumed the role of both parents. I can only imagine how difficult it must have been for her to raise seven children as a single parent, but my mother persevered and instilled in us (her children) a deep sense of morality, values, and integrity. She often quoted her father, husband, and brother-in-law (Nobel Prize Nominee Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan) as examples to follow. My mother grew up witnessing her father's (Allama Mashriqi) political life. It is through my mother and her siblings (as well as relatives, Khaksars, etc.) that I first learned of the politics of many of Mashriqi's contemporaries. Discussions on Jinnah, Gandhi, Azad, Nehru (Mashriqi's class-fellow at the University of Cambridge) and other leaders often took place at our house. People frequently asked my mother questions about Mashriqi's political life. I keenly listened to the question and answer sessions with visitors and family friends. Apart from her father's political life, my mother often spoke of her revered brother, Ehsanullah Khan Aslam, who died on May 31, 1940, as a result of injuries sustained from police brutality on March 19, 1940. Indeed, my mother's life was deeply influenced by – and became part and parcel of – the freedom movement; her accounts of the freedom movement left a lasting impact on me.

My mother cared deeply about ensuring that the story of the freedom movement – in which her father played a crucial role – was portrayed accurately in the history books. Throughout my youth, I was my mother's lieutenant, a role that included making appointments with high-level officials. I accompanied my mother to important meetings with many high-ups, including Zulfiqar Ali

Bhutto (Prime Minister of Pakistan), Shamsul Doha (Federal Minister), Maulvi Farid Ahmed (a Bengali Member National Assembly), and Qudaratullah Shahab (Federal Secretary of Education), to compel them to correct the distorted history of the Indian sub-continent. During the meetings, Mashriqi and Jinnah were discussed. My mother mentioned that her father's political differences with Mr. Jinnah should be made public, without twisting the facts. She pointed out that if the distortion of history continued and her father's thoughts were misrepresented, that it could have very serious and damaging repercussions for the nation. My mother urged the leaders of Pakistan to correct the nation's history, revise the educational syllabus, and form a dedicated research institute on Allama Mashriqi to collect and publish materials and translate his works. This effort was important, as it would enable individuals around the world to understand Mashriqi's ideology and views on uniting the human race, including his major role in the freedom movement. On my mother's instruction, I also met with Maulana Kauser Niazi (Federal Minister of Information) regarding the issue.

Over the years, my mother shared with us a number of interesting anecdotes as a participant in the freedom movement. Some of the notable information she mentioned included: (1) Jamalud Din Afghani (famous political activist and Islamic ideologist) stayed at her paternal grandfather's house (also see *Dehul'baab* by Allama Mashriqi). (2) As Under Secretary of Education, many Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, etc. used to meet with Mashriqi for various reasons, including to seek endorsement for high-level government openings or to recommend him for Knighthood. Sir Allama Mohammad Iqbal, Nawab Sir Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Sirdar Sir Jogendra Singh and others received the title of "Sir" with Mashriqi's help (also see *Hareem-e-Ghaib* by Allama Mashriqi, page 296). (3) Allama Iqbal's daughter used to come to my mother's house in Icchra (Lahore) to play games. (4) Mashriqi paid a dowry of Rupees 5,000 to each of his daughters upon their marriage. (5) Qudratullah Shahab's (ICS officer and author of *Shahabnama*) family proposed marriage for my mother's older sister. (6) Mashriqi met or corresponded with many heads of state, Muslim kings, scholars, and scientists, including Albert Einstein and Adolf Hitler.

My mother was a kindhearted and caring woman. She taught me about history and shared with me her firsthand knowledge about my grandfather and the freedom movement. She was someone who sacrificed, both on behalf of her children and her father. Her efforts to correct the history regarding Allama Mashriqi were admirable. Unfortunately, the distortion of history that she lamented still continues, and has resulted in many problems in the region. Perhaps the best way to honor her legacy, and that of her father, is to restore the lost history of the region and to unite around the philosophy and principles espoused by Allama Mashriqi. It is a cause that my mother always supported and one worthy of her memory.

Masuda Yousaf passed away in Pakistan on November 5, 1984. May God rest her soul in peace.

Nasim Yousaf is a scholar, historian, and author of ten books and numerous articles, primarily focusing on the role of Allama Mashriqi and the Khaksar Tehrik in the freedom movement of British India. Mr. Yousaf has presented papers at U.S. conferences and contributed articles to the "Harvard Asia Quarterly," "Pakistaniaat," and the "World History Encyclopedia (USA)." He has also compiled a digital version of Allama Mashriqi's weekly journal called "Al-Islah" (1930s-1940s). His most recent book is a collection of articles entitled "Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan - Pioneer of Microcredit & Guru of Rural Development." He is currently working on more books and articles. Additional information on Mr. Yousaf is available on the Internet.

Copyright© Nasim Yousaf 2012

Article published in:

All Voices (USA), November 04, 2012
<http://www.allvoices.com>

News from Bangladesh, November 05, 2012
<http://www.bangladesh-web.com>

Pukhtoonistan Gazette, November 05, 2012
www.pukhtoonistangazette.com

The Lahore Times, November 05, 2012
<http://www.lhrtimes.com>

Make Pakistan Better, November 05, 2012
<http://www.makepakistanbetter.com>

Voice of Worldnews, November 05, 2012
<http://voiceofworldnews.com>

Indian Muslim Observer (India), November 07, 2012
<http://www.indianmuslimobserver.com>

The Eastern Post (India), November 07, 2012
<http://www.theeasternpost.org>

Kashmir Images (Srinagar, Kashmir), November 07, 2012
<http://www.dailykashmirimages.com/news-a-woman-who-knew-the-truth-about-indias-partition-33524.aspx>

Bloggers, November 07, 2012
<http://bloggers.com/post/masuda-yousaf-the-woman-who-knew-the-truth-about-indias-partition-9523455>

Daily Pegham, November 10, 2012
<http://www.dailypegham.com>

Media Today USA, November 10, 2012
<http://www.mediatodayusa.com>

YouTube, November 11, 2012
<http://www.youtube.com/infomashriqi>